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ABSTRACT

The concept of scaffolding can be used as a framework to argue that a "rich interpretation" in child language is needed in the area of early literacy learning. Child language is the reading-like text language of "prereading" kindergarten children. Two threads (internal and external) of the scaffolding process have been identified. The external thread describes how the linguistic community arranges speech encounters so that the young speaker can get a hold on how to make his or her intentions clear and how to penetrate the intentions of others. The internal thread is concerned with how communicative intent is successively transformed through negotiation into increasingly powerful linguistic procedures. After reading picture storybooks to kindergarten children, the children were invited to "read" the books. The readings indicated that children are active learners and that as the children continue to read, they construct texts that are closer to the structure the author has used. These findings suggest that the definition of reading needs to be expanded and perhaps even altered, and that what young children should and could be doing in the name of reading should be reconsidered. (Excerpts of some of the children's "readings," and analyses of these readings are included.) (DF)

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Scaffolding: Observing and Responding to Young Children Learning to Read by Reading

Christine C. Pappas

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Scaffolding: Observing and Responding to Young Children Learning to Read by Reading

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English - 74th, Detroit, MI, November, 16-21, 1984.

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Introduction

During the 1970's, research in child language shifted from a focus on formalism to a focus on functualism (e.g., Bruner, 1975a, 1975b; Dore, 1974, Halliday, 1975; Karmiloff-Smith, 1979; Ryan, 1974). Researchers began to insist on the need for a "rich interpretation" of child language, which implied the use of context and communicative function in evaluating the forms young children were acquiring. Jerome Bruner and his colleagues (Bruner, 1975a, 1975b, 1982; Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Ratner & Bruner, 1978) began such investigations of early language acquisition and as a result of their research offered the concept "scaffolding" to describe the process by which adults support the young child's achievements of his/her communicative intentions in using oral/spoken language.

In this paper, I want to use the concept of scaffolding as a framework to argue that a "rich interpretation" in child language is also desparately needed in the area of early literacy learning. The child language to be interpreted herein will be the reading-like text language of "prereading" kindergarten children. As we observe and examine the children's language, it will be clear that these children are learning important skills in reading as they begin to approximate the content and structure of a book read to them. In the last part of the paper, a consideration of what the children's achievements suggest for

assessing and supporting - or scaffolding - the progress of young children learning to read by reading will be made.

Threads of Scaffolding

Two aspects or interrelated threads of the scaffolding process have been identified by Bruner (1983) - one which is "external," the other "internal." The first thread, the external thread, describes "how the linguistic community arranges speech encounters so that the young aspirant speaker can get a hold on how to make his own communicative intentions clear and how to penetrate the intentions of others" (Bruner, 1983, p. 10). An analogous such "external" thread must occur to support literacy learning. That is, the linguistic community must provide or arrange literacy encounters so that the young learner, as an aspirant writer, can get a hold on how to make his/her communicative intentions clear for readers, and, as an aspirant reader, can get a hold on how to penetrate the communicative intentions of authors. I will argue, as others (Holdaway, 1979; Smith, 1982a, 1982b; Teale, 1984; Wells, 1981, 1982, 1983) have, that a large proportion of these "external" literacy situations must consist of adults reading aloud a range of favorite, real books to young children. The reasons for reading to children are closely related to the second thread of the scaffolding process.

This second thread, according to Bruner (1983), is an "internal" or procedural one. In terms of oral language development, this second thread is concerned with "how communicative intent is successively transformed through negotiation into increasingly powerful linguistic procedures" (p. 10). In other words, in spoken language development this "internal" thread supports young children's conversational strategies: their abilities to take turns and collaborate with others in the construction of meanings (Wells, 1981).

An "internal"or procedural thread is involved in fostering literacy development as well. Reading or learning to read will not be viewed here as a unique process, one this is so very unusual or different from understanding and using spoken/oral language (Cambourne, 1981; Smith, 1982a). However, because human beings use written language for different purposes - to communicate across space and time and with individuals they normally do not know - the meanings communicated in typical written language are realized by different structures and semantic patterns (Cambourne, 1981; Halliday, 1977; McKenzie, 1977; Pappas, 1983; Smith 1982a). New powerful linguistic procedures must be transformed and internalized by children. But what exactly are these literate linguistic procedures and what do we know about them so we can support and foster them? In learning to read what new strategies do young children acquire and develop to construct or penetrate the communicative intent of authors? In other words, how do they learn and get a hold on "book language" or the registers of written language?

To answer these questions I have been reading picture storybooks to kindergarten children, children who are not as yet reading in the traditional sense. I read each particular book three times (each time is usually one day later). Each time - after I am done taking my turn to read a particular book to a child - I invite the child to take his/her turn to "read" it. I merely say to the children that Elga (who is the children's teacher and who is my co-principal investigator of the research project) and I are interested in their good ideas about reading books. I acknowledge that they may not be able to read the book "for real," but suggest that they can read it "their own way" -- they can "pretend read" it if they want.

A picture storybook in children's literature circles is a book which has pictures, but the illustrations are only extensions of the text or linguistic message (Huck, 1976). That is, the pictures may enrich the interpretation of the story, but they are not necessary for its understanding. Thus, a picture storybook is a good example of typical written language and is a suitable vehicle for looking at children's developing linguistic procedures for using and "reading" it.

Learning to Read by Reading

This section of the paper provides excerpts of some of the children's "readings" of The Owl and the Woodpecker (Wildsmith, 1971). An examination of these readings will clearly demonstrate that these children are indeed learning to read by reading. Three characteristics or features of this learning are important to point out before we examine specific language samples. First, and foremost, the children's readings indicate that the children are active learners. They use what they already know about the world, language, and books to construct the communicative intent of the author. Secondly, elaborations in the first reading(s) -- stemming from the pictures and their world knowledge -- tend to drop in subsequent readings as children construct texts which are closer to the structure and semantic patterns the author has used. Finally, distributions of ahs, false starts, repetitions of words, as well as the children's repairs (abandonment of initial wordings for better ones) across the three readings, all seem to reflect an emergence of fluency in the production of their texts and of the development of self-correcting or self-monitoring behavior. That is, self-regulatory operations, which are crucial in learning any skill, are apparent as the children attempt to construct their reading texts.

Let us first look at how children begin to read the first three pages of The Owl and the Woodpecker. The first two units of the text of the book (which happens also to be the first two sentences) constitute the Placement (Hasan, in press), which other global story structural schemes call the Setting. (See Pappas, in press, for a review of various story structure forms.) The third unit on the third page begins the Initiating Event (Hasan, in press), which other schemes call the Beginning element. It is in the Initiating Event that the complicating issue or problem emerges in the story. Figure 1 shows the text of the book and how Brad "read" these pages.

Global Structure Element	Page	Unit	Text of The Owl and the Woodpecker by Brian Wildsmith
PLACE-MENT	1	1	Once upon a time, in a forest, far away, there lived a Woodpecker.
	2	2	The Woodpecker lived in a tree in which he slept all night and worked all day.
INITIA-TING EVENT	3	3	In the tree next door, there came to live an Owl, who liked to work all night and sleep all day.

		Page	Unit	
Brad (6.7)	Reading #1	1	1	[there] once upon a time there was a woodpecker that was very kind and loving
		2	2	[he pecked all] he slept all night and [pecked] worked all day
		3	3	there was an owl that slept all day [work] and worked all night
	Reading #2	1 & 2	1	[there once was] there once was a woodpecker that [umm] lived in a forest far far away in a hollow tree [he he] which he worked all day and slept all night
		3	2	once [live] came to live an owl [he like] which he slept all day and worked all night

Reading #3	1	1	once upon a time far far away in the forest
	&		there lived a woodpecker which he worked all
	2		day and slept all night
	3	2	there came to live an owl which he worked all night and slept all day

Figure 1. The first three pages of The Owl and the Woodpecker and Brad's three readings of them.

There are several things to notice about Brad's reading texts. In unit #1 of Reading #1, Brad remarks that the woodpecker is kind and loving. Further in the story, the woodpecker "saves the day" so to speak, so this elaboration in his first reading is an understandable one. Note that this elaboration is dropped in his subsequent readings. Also observe Brad's repairs -- places where he abandons initial wordings for better or suitable ones -- in his first unit and in other units. These repairs reflect the self-regulatory operations already mentioned. Although this kind of behavior has not as yet analyzed in detail, I believe that it may be an important feature of the internal literate linguistic procedures being developed in learning to read by reading.

In the first unit of Reading #2, Brad adds in a forest far far away and in a hollow tree, and in unit #2 he includes came to live. In unit #1 of Reading #2, Brad is also learning the which grammatical structure, a structure which is typical in written communication, but not so frequent in typical oral language use. The book has in which he slept.... but Brad has constructed an approximation of it. In unit #2 of Reading #2 his which he is his approximation for who. This kind of structure can be seen in Reading #3, too.

Figure 2 presents Mary's efforts in reading the first three pages of the book. Observe the ways she sorts out the introduction of the characters and especially note the nature of her repairs.

		Page	Unit	
Mary (6.1)	Reading #1	1	1	there once was a woodpecker [that lived far] that lived in the forest
			2	[he hadn't] he had a tree next to a owl's tree
		2	3	[he tapped] [this owl tap] // I mean // this woodpecker tapped all day and slept all night
		3	4	but the owl that lives next door [slept all ni] slept all day and worked all night
	Reading #2	1	1	once was in a forest a woodpecker
		2	2	he lived in a tree -- his very own tree
		3	3	next door his neighbor the owl sleeped sleeped sleeped
	Reading #3	1	1	there once [is] was in [uh] a forest lived a woodpecker
		2	2	he tapped all day and slept all night
		3	3	and next door was a owl
			4	he worked all night and sleeped all day

Figure 2. Mary's three readings of the first three pages of The Owl and the Woodpecker.

Robert's three readings of the same pages can be found in Figure 3.

		Page	Unit	
Robert (6.0)	Reading #1	1	1	once upon a time there was a owl and a woodpecker [who who lived at] who lived right next to each other
		2	2	every day the woodpecker would keep on pecking and pecking [ah every day]
			3	and sometimes in the night he would go to sleep
		3	4	and [acro] across from that tree there was a rusty old owl
			5	[he was] he was so grumpy and so rude that he could not stand the noise from the pecking along on his tree
	Reading #2	1	1	once upon a time [there] was a owl and a woodpecker
			2	they did not live very far from each other
			3	[so they] [and they had] and they needed that home to be happy
		2	4	[but all] [but some] [but all the night] but [the woodpec] the woodpecker would peck on his tree [all ah]

		5	he would work all day and sleep all night until the next day
	3	6	and across from the woodpecker's tree not very far [was a cr] lived a crusty old owl [in a] in a hollow tree
		7	[he he] he was so patient sometimes and [so] sometimes so rude that he could not stand the noise
Reading #3	1	1	once upon a time [in] in a forest not far from here lived a owl and a woodpecker
	2	2	every day the woodpecker would tap away
		3	and every night he would sleep
	3	4	and not far from that tree lived a crotchety and rude owl
		5	and every day he could not stand the noise
		6	and he always had to stay awake and try to make the woodpecker stop

Figure 3. Robert's three readings of the first three pages of The Owl and the Woodpecker.

In Reading #1 Robert places or introduces both the woodpecker and the owl in first unit -- which he continues to do in Readings #2 and #3 as well. Later in his text Robert, then, reintroduces the owl. Look at what he says about the owl. In unit #4 of Reading #1 he reads there was a rusty old owl and in unit #5 he says that the owl was so grumpy and so rude. To appreciate Robert's constructions in these two units you must know that further on in the story the author will state that the owl is crotchety and rude. Robert includes, therefore, these meanings of the book earlier in his texts. Notice that in Reading #2, unit #6, the owl is now a crusty old owl and in Reading #3, unit #4, the owl finally becomes a crotchety and rude owl. Thus, in learning to read by reading, Robert is also learning new vocabulary words, but he is learning them on his own terms.

(See Table 1 for p. 4 of the book.)

Robert's readings of page 5 of the book (Figure 4) indicate that Robert is learning other vocabulary words or lexical items used by the author.

The Book - The Owl lost his temper.

(p. 5) - His screeches and hoots echoed through the forest,

- and animals for miles around came running to see what was the matter.

Robert Reading #1 - [so wh] [so sud] so the owl made so big of screeches all the animals came rushing over [to the two trees] to the two [ta trawl] tall trees to see what was the matter

#2 - and then he hooted and crowed and cooled and called so loudly that all the other animals in the forest came running over to see what the matter was

#3 - so then all the owl's hoots and hollers echoed through the forest and animals [from all] from all around came came [over to the owl's to] to the owl and the woodpecker's tree.

Figure 4. Page 5 of The Owl and the Woodpecker and Robert's three readings of it.

Robert goes from owl made so big of screeches (Reading #1) to he hooted and crowed and cooled and called so loudly (Reading #2) to the owl's hoots and hollers echoed through the forest (Reading #3).

Mark's renditions of page 5 of the book is in Figure 5. He begins with owl is squeaking, then reads, he screeched and hooted and echoed, and finally, in Reading #3 ends up with he screeched and hooted and it echoed.

Mark Reading #1 -and [um] the owl was squeaking so much [um] all the animals from all over....

Reading #2 -and owl was so [ah] mad that he screeched and hooted and [all ah] echoed all through the woods

Reading #3 -the owl was so mad he screeched and hooted

-[and um] and it echoed through the forest

Figure 5. Mark's three readings of The Owl and the Woodpecker.

(See Table 1 for the text of page 6 of the book.)

Children asked a lot of questions about the pictures on page 7. The illustration on that page depicts the owl flying about with lots of small animals already in, or running to, holes of the large trunk and roots of a tree.

The Book (p. 7) -Angrily, the Owl swooped down on the small animals, who ran for their lives and hid in all kinds of curious places.

-"Bully," they shouted, when they were safe.

Holly (6.4) -Reading #1 -and the owl flew down from his tree about to catch one of the mice

-and they all ran away when they thought the owl was after them

-and the mouse ran away too//that's the mouse//HMM I SEE HIM//is that the mouse?//I DON'T KNOW. IT'S HARD TO TELL WHEN PART OF IT'S INSIDE AND PART OF IT'S OUTSIDE.//yeah it's the mouse the ears is that small//

#2 -the owl flew down to the ground [to catch those of funny] to get the small animals

-they all swung around and hid in all sorts of different places//oh I see where the mouse is//

-[the animals] the small animals came out of their hiding places

#3 -and the owl flew down to the ground to get all of the animals

-[the] the animals ran to all different places to hide

-then [the uh] the little small animals [said] yelled "bully" when they were sure they were safe

Figure 6. Page 7 of The Owl and the Woodpecker and Holly's three readings of it

Figure 6 indicates that for Holly it seemed important to sort out some of the animals -- especially the mouse -- in her three readings. Note that she gets increasingly closer to text of the book; even "Bully" emerges in the last unit of her Reading #3.

Figure 7 shows Brad's attempts in reading page 7. Again, sorting out the animals seemed important. By reading #3 lexical items of the book, such as angry, swooped down, and "bully", and so forth, are all included.

Brad Reading #1-he got so mad [all the animals] [all the]

-he chased all the little animals until they should hide in fear//Look, the frog (laughs) He could hide fast!//YEAH. YOU THINK SO? (Brad points to another animal in the picture --WHAT IS THAT? SOME SORT OF MOLE?)//Yeah, it's a mole.

Reading #2-so he swooped down to all the little animals until [they] they had to hide

-said "hoot" [when when they were] when they got there

Reading #3-and [he anger] the owl angry swooped down on the little animals

-and [they said] "bully" said the [anim] little animals when they thought they were safe

Figure 7. Brad's three readings of page 7 of The Owl and the Woodpecker.

(See Table 1 for page 8 of the book.)

The culmination of the Initiating Event of the story is on page 9 of the book. It sets up the Sequent Event, where attempts to resolve the problem of the story will occur.

The Book (p. 9) -But the woodpecker would not move.

-Day after day his noisy tapping kept the Owl awake.

-And day after day the Owl became more tired and more bad-tempered.

-He began to be so crotchety and rude that all the other animals decided that something must be done.

Mary (6.1) Reading #1 -[day and night] day and night woodpecker kept on pecking [and the owl get (...)] while the owl got more and more tired

-and the animals said "we'll must have to do something"

#2 -but the the woodpecker did not move

-he keeped on pecking

-and the owl would not move either

-he kept on awake

-[there had to be]//I mean//there had to be something done

#3 -[every day every night the woodpeck]//I mean// every day the woodpecker tapped

-every day and every night [the woodpecker]//I mean// the owl got more tired and more tired

-[and] and the owl got so crotchety

and mean [they] the animals decided to have a meeting

Figure 8. Page 9 of The Owl and the Woodpecker and Mary's three readings of it

Mary's readings (Figure 8) indicate that she is picking up both the grammatical and semantic patterns of the author: by Reading #3 she begins to approximate the two day after day constructions of the book with every day and every day and every night; she approaches the book's more tired and more bad-tempered and so crotchety and rude with her wordings of more tired and more tired and so crotchety and mean.

(See Table 1 for page 10 of the book.)

Figure 9 shows the text of page 11 and examples of how two children are tackling the <u>But no matter</u> ..... structure on that page.

<u>The Book</u> (p. 11)	-That night while the Owl was out hunting they all tried to push down his tree.	
	*-But no matter how hard they pushed and puffed and panted they could not move the tree the smallest bit.	
	-So they gave up, and went back home.	
Robert (6.0)	Reading #1	-but no matter they puffed and grunted they couldn't push it over
	#2	-but all the puffs and grunts they could not [puff] [<u>punsh</u>] push it down
	#3	-but no matter how they puffed and how they panted they could not push it down.
Mary (6.1)	Reading #1	-one more harder they pushed the more little inch the tree moved
		-the tree would not move a inch
	#2	-but more inch by inch they tried it they could not push it one inch
	#3	-but more they heaved and heaved and pushed the tree would not move a inch.

Figure 9. Page 11 of <u>The Owl and the Woodpecker</u> and Robert's and Mary's three readings of Unit 2 of that page.

Robert seems to be focusing more on the first part of the structure and by the third reading he gets but no matter how. In contrast, Mary seems to be working on the second part of the book's structure (they could not move the tree the smallest bit) and integrating it with the first part of the structure. In all of her readings the smallest bit of the book is approximated by several wordings of similar meaning--little inch, inch by inch, one inch, and a inch. In the first two readings, a redundancy regarding this meaning exists: in Reading #1, Mary attempts the author's structure by producing two units, each of which includes inch; in Reading #2, Mary now produces a single unit, but it possesses both inch by inch and one inch. Finally, in Reading #3, a very close approximation of the book structure emerges; the earlier redundancy is dropped--only a inch exists--more is substituted for no matter how, and the pushed and puffed and panted of the book is replaced with heaved and heaved and pushed. Mary's endeavors clearly illustrate the fact that learning about such typically written structures may only be learned through reading books which contain them.

Page 12 of the book (Figure 10) is as follows:

The Book (p. 12)
-Some time later two strangers came to the forest.
-They were a pair of beavers,
-and they took a fancy to the Owl's tree, and started to gnaw at the trunk.
-Every day they gnawed a little more, until it seemed as if they would gnaw the trunk right through.

Figure 10. Page 12 of The Owl and the Woodpecker

Children used a great number of substitutions of certain words on this page in their readings, especially in their first readings. For two strangers, they read creatures and weird kind of animals. For gnawed, the children substituted sawed down, chewed it and nibbled at. Brad's approximation had the "Kellogg's Rice Crispies" influence. In his first reading, he read: one day visitors came/they crunched and cracked and crackled and popped on the tree.

The beginning of the Final Event (Hasan, in press) occurs on page 13 of the book. This is where the resolution of the problem in the story emerges. Page 13 contains a lot of text and many children turned back during their reading to this page to "read" more.

The Book -Then one day a great storm shook the forest.
(p. 13) -The wind roared through the trees.
-It was so strong the Woodpecker gave up tapping
FINAL -and so for once the Owl slept in peace.
EVENT -The Owl's tree began to creak and crack and groan as the wind grew more and more fierce,
-but the tired Owl slept soundly on.
-Suddenly the Woodpecker saw the Owl's tree begin to sway and fall.
-At once he struggled bravely through the storm and tapped loudly close to the Owl's ear to wake him.
-The Owl woke in a fury, hearing the Woodpecker tapping on his tree,
-but when he realized his tree was being blown down his anger quickly disappeared.

-Together the Woodpecker and the Owl struggled to safety just as the tree crashed to the ground.

Robert (6.0)

Reading #1
-then one day [the] a great storm came
-and the woodpecker could not stand the big storm that he decided to stop pecking
-but the owl didn't hear the noise any more and just kept on sleeping
-then [the wood] the woodpecker finally noticed that the tree was swaying and crashing over
-so then he tapped closely to the owl's ear so he could hear him -- so he could hear the great warning
-then [he] they struggled out to safety together
-
-

Reading #3
-so he tapped near his ear where the owl could hear him
-[then the] [when the] and then when the owl noticed that his tree was tipping over [he] all of his anger slipped away

Figure 11. Page 13 of The Owl and the Woodpecker and Robert's Reading #1 and an except of his Reading #3.

Figure 11 provides the text for page 13 and Robert's first reading and an excerpt of his third reading. Notice the inclusion of the great warning in the next to the last unit in his first reading. That elaboration was present in his second reading (not included in Figure 11) as well, but not in his

third one. The excerpt of Reading #3 is supplied here to include Robert's wonderful anproximation of anger slipped away for Wildsmith's anger quickly disappeard.

(See Table 1 for page 14 of the book.)

Page 15 of the book is the Finale (F) (Hasan, in presss). The Finale, which is an optional global text structure element for stories, is realized in The Owl and the Woodpecker. The Finale is characterized by a restoration or re-establishment of equilibrium (Tordorov, 1971) or the habitual state of affairs for the main protatogists of the story which could, for example, serve as a Placement for another tale (Hasan, in press). Figure 12 provides page 15 (the last page of the book) and three children's ending or last units of their three readings.

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The Book (p. 15)		-So the Owl and the Woodpecker became good friends, -and the Woodpecker helped the Owl to find another tree in a quiet part of the forest, where he could sleep all day without being disturbed.
FINALE		*-Peace and quiet returned to the forest *-and the Owl and the Woodpecker remained good friends all the rest of their lives.
Jeanne	Reading #1	-and then he could sleep peace and quiet all day
	#2	-and the forest was once again a peacefully forest/the end
	#3	-and once again the forest was peaceful/the end

Mary	Reading #1	-and [um they] now the woodpecker and owl live far away and became good friends all the rest of their life
	#2	-and so they were great friends for the rest of their life
	#3	-and so now the owl slept in place -and they were both great friends
Holly	Reading #1	-and soon peace and quiet came to the forest where owl lived/the end
	#2	-and owl and woodpecker were good friends for the rest of their life/the end
	#3	-so peace and quiet came to the part of the forest where owl lived/the end

Figure 12. Page 15 of The Owl and the Woodpecker and three children's last units of their three readings.

The focus of attention here is on the last two units of the book. A review of the children's units indicates that certain meanings in this part of the text had differing degrees of salience for individual children. For example, Jeanne never mentions the sustaining friendship between Owl and Woodpecker. She, instead, concentrates on the fact that the peace had returned to the forest in all three of her readings. Mary's first two readings, on the other hand, reflects a "good friends" focus. In Reading #3, however, "peace" and "friends" get equal billing. Holly's readings show fluctuation regarding these meanings: In Reading #1 she focuses on "peace and

quiet"; in Reading #2 she shifts to the "good friends" thesis; and in Reading #3 she returns again to "peace and quiet" motif.

Implications

The children you have met through their readings are now in first grade. Are their teachers observing the children's efforts and initiations regarding reading in the ways we have seen here? Or, do they even bother? They may not have time, or make time, because they have been convinced that learning to read in the early years of schooling is learning letters, "sounds" of letters, or recognizing and decoding words.

What kinds of materials will the children be reading? What will Brad, Mary, Robert, Mark, Holly and Jeanne be learning if they read passages from a basal (Macmillan, 1980) like this:

Bob

Bob likes to fish.
Why?
Why does Bob like to fish?

Bob likes fish.
That is why
he likes to fish.

Bob likes little fish
and big fish.

Bob says,
"I like fish.
I like to sit
and fish."

The fish go to Bob.
The fish like Bob.
And that is why
Bob likes to fish.
(p. 49-50)

Is this even a story? How will asking lots of questions about this "story" (provided by the teacher's manual), and taking probably days to complete the task, support the children's literacy development? Or should their teachers use other so-called "stories," such as those developed by Mason (1981) from the University of Illinois?

Stop Sign

Stop, car (picture of stop sign and car).
Stop, bus (picture of stop sign and bus).
Stop, truck (picture of stop sign and truck).
Stop (picture of train crossing and track).
For the train (picture of train).
Tooot (no picture).

What should count as reading in the early years of schooling? How should we assess and support the progress of young children's learning to read? The "rich child language" provided in this paper demonstrates how children are learning important basic skills -- important literate linguistic procedures -- which can only be learned by adults reading real books to them and by giving the children a chance to "read" or "re-enact" them on their own. We need to expand -- and perhaps even alter -- our definition of reading. We need to reconsider what young children should and could be doing in the name of reading, and then consider what our scaffolding should be like to support their efforts.

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Table 1

The Owl and the Woodpecker by Brian Wildsmith

Page 4
-The Woodpecker worked so hard and made so much noise that his tapping
woke the owl.
-"I say, you, there!" screeched the owl.
-"How can I possibly sleep with all that noise going on?"
-"This is my tree," the Woodpecker said"
-"and I shall tap it as I please."

Page 6
-"You carry on tapping, Master Woodpecker," squeaked the mouse.
-"Owl is always bossing and chasing us about."
-"Oh, do be quiet," growled the Bear.
-"Woodpecker, stop tapping, and let Owl sleep."
-"We like peace and quiet around here."

Page 8
-Then the Owl asked the bigger animals what he could do to stop the noise,
- but they all shook their heads.
-"How should we know?" they said.
-"You are the wise and clever one.
- Perhaps you could move to another tree."
-"Why should I?" snapped the owl.
-"I like living in this tree.
-"That noisy Wookpecker must move."

Page 10
-So they held a meeting.
-"Something must be done," said the Badger.
-"Woodpecker was first,
- so Owl must leave."
-"But he says he will not leave his tree," replied the Deer.
-"In that case we shall have to push down the tree,
- and then he will have to leave," said the crafty Fox.

Page 14
-Then the storm died away.
-and the Owl thanked the Woodpecker for saving his life.
-Now he was glad that the Woodpecker had been his neighbor.